

May 28, 2014

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0512

Dear Congresswoman Pelosi:

On behalf of the three million members of the National Education Association and the students they serve, we urge you to support the bipartisan amendment to the FY15 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill (H.R. 4660) by Reps. Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Peter King (R-NY), which would provide an additional \$19.5 million for grants to states and ensure tens of thousands of records of prohibited firearm purchasers are provided to the FBI for inclusion in the National Instant Criminal Background Checks System (NICS). Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 113th Congress.

The impetus for the *NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007* (P.L. 110-180), passed unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush, was to make the instant background check system for gun sales faster and more accurate. To achieve these goals, Congress promised to give the states money to improve the NICS database, particularly with regard to ensuring the inclusion of disqualifying domestic violence and mental illness records.

While the submission of records—and effectiveness—of NICS has improved, progress has been slow due to the failure to appropriate the authorized amount. In FY2014, the U.S. Department of Justice was unable to meet 25 percent of states' grant requests due to the funding shortfall. Twelve states have submitted fewer than 100 mental health records to NICS. At least 2.5 million arrest warrants outstanding in five states still have not been entered into the system, allowing potentially dangerous fugitives to pass a background check.

Educators are all too aware of the tragic toll taken on students, families, and communities by senseless gun violence that can be prevented with common-sense steps. Congress was in unison when the *NICS Improvement Amendments Act* became law seven years ago, and this Congress can now ensure the law works more effectively as states request the money they need to make background checks more quickly and accurately. We urge you to support the Thompson/King amendment to the FY15 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill (H.R. 4660) to help ensure safer communities and learning environments for our nation's students.

Sincerely,

Mary Kusler
Director, Government Relations



Dear Representative:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members across the country, I write to urge you to support the bipartisan Thompson-King-Esty-Heck-Fitzpatrick-Quigley Amendment to H.R. 4660—the FY2015 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. This amendment provides additional funding to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), helping to protect our children by preventing dangerous individuals from purchasing firearms.

As the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the United States, PTA advocates for the safety of every child. We believe that Congress must take reasonable actions to protect children and youth from gun violence. Therefore, our members support federal initiatives to restrict access to firearms by persons who may endanger public safety and the NICS is a critical tool in these efforts.

However, the success of the NICS is dependent upon states to input criminal data, but many states do not have adequate funding to acquire, implement, and manage the technology to automate the reporting of criminal history and mental health records. This has resulted in millions of outstanding arrest warrants failing to be entered into the system, potentially allowing these individuals to pass a background check.

The Thompson-King-Esty-Heck-Fitzpatrick-Quigley Amendment would provide states with resources to ensure the system has complete and timely information. Though authorization for NICS Improvement grants was passed unanimously in Congress in 2007, the program has been significantly underfunded since that time. In the last year, the Department of Justice was unable to fund almost \$20 million in requests from states. The Thompson-King-Esty-Heck-Fitzpatrick-Quigley Amendment to H.R. 4660 provides for \$19.5 million to help meet this demand.

This is the opportunity to prevent and reduce firearm violence in the United States. PTA urges you to help keep our nation's children, families, and communities safe by supporting the Thompson-King-Esty-Heck-Fitzpatrick-Quigley Amendment to H.R. 4660.

If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at jseitz@pta.org.

Sincerely,

Otha Thornton
National PTA President



Dear Members of Congress,

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), on behalf of its State and Territorial Coalitions, their 2,300 domestic violence programs and the millions of victims of domestic violence they serve, thank those of you who have already indicated your support for the Thompson-King Amendment to HR 4660 (the 2015 CJS Appropriations bill) to increase funding for NICS—and urge each and every one of you to please vote in support of this important, life-saving, amendment.

The Thompson-King Amendment changes no policy. It simply provides funding to states and territories as they comply with already established Congressional laws to ensure that domestic violence abusers—who Congress and the Supreme Court have already determined ineligible to be trusted with the responsibility of handling firearms—are flagged when they attempt to ignore the law. NICS saves women's lives. Please support NICS' ability to do that by voting in favor of the Thompson-King Amendment to HR 4660.

Sincerely,
Paulette Sullivan Moore



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